

Beautiful Naked Women

Holly Welker

Beautiful naked women turn up all over,
in California they hide behind redwoods,
in Paris they picnic on the grass.
My doctor sends me a postcard of a plump nude
seated on Turkish pillows, smoking a cigarette;
Armstrong, Aldrin, and Collins pose behind her
in their medals and space suits;
it's someone's idea of a luncheon on the moon,
and my doctor wrote, "Come get your new prescription!"
But pills never told me that Botticelli's Venus
holds her hand to her breast to frame her face,
not because her nails are anything special.

In medieval tapestries virgins more beautiful
than any Venus lure unicorns
with purple heads and black-tipped horns.
If someone stays pure it's because
of a desire to hoard beauty. But that won't explain
those beautiful nudes caught without pain
or illness. Discarded Barbie dolls
turn up years later missing one leg
and all their clothes. If you're ugly
and you need to cry in public, close
your eyes and no one will see you, others
return to their various destinies;
if destiny blessed you with a fine figure
then your fate is to be sure
that your fine body carries
your fine head erect.